

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4856
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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 4006

EXDIS

1. DURING COURSE LONG CONVERSATION WITH KING ON JUNE 14, QUESTION TURNED TO OMAN. KING NOTED HE PLANNING TO VISIT GULF AND WILL BE IN OMAN AROUND JUNE 26. I ASKED IF HE WAS GOING TO BE THERE FOR SOMETIME. HE SAID HE HOPED FOR SEVERAL DAYS AND WANTED TO SEE MORE THAN HE HAD LAST TIME. I CONSIDERED IT SIGNIFICANT THAT AT NO TIME DID ANY OF THE OLD VENOM ABOUT THE BRITISH ROLE EMERGE, ALTHOUGH HE DID SAY HE THOUGHT THAT WHEN THE SULTAN GETS CLOSE TO THE HOMESTRETCH HE OUGHT TO GET ALL OF THE FOREIGN FORCES OUT SO THAT HIS PEOPLE CAN LOOK TO THE SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES FOR THE FINAL VICTORY.

2. ON JORDAN FORCES STAYING IN OMAN THERE IS CERTAINLY A SPLIT VIEW WITH THE KING INCLINED TO KEEP THE SPECIAL FORCES BALLALION THERE, PERHAPS ROTATING THE PRESENT GROUP WITH ANOTHER AFTER THE SIX MONTHS ARE UP. RIFAI DISAGREES. HE WAS PRESENT AT THE TALK AND MADE NEGATIVE BUT RESPECTFULLY SO, NOISES AS KING AND I DISCUSSED THE ISSUE. (WE KNOW BOTH RIFAI AND CHIEF OF STAFF BIN SHAKER LATTER IS NOT VISITING OMAN WOULD PREFER TO BRING THE BOYS BACK. THERE HAS BEEN SOME GRUMBLING FROM THE ARMY THE FEW CASUALTIES HAVE BEEN CLEVERLY MAGNIFIED (MAINLY BY PLO) AROUND THE AMMAN RUMOR CIRCUIT, AND JORDANIANS ARE VULNERABLE TO THE CHARGE THAT THEY HAVE DRAWN FORCES AWAY FROM THE ARAB FRONT AGAINST ISRAEL). KING NOTED THAT ASAD WHEN HE WAS HERE DID NOT DISCOURAGE
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JORDANIAN PARTICIPATION IN OMAN, POSSIBLY BECAUSE JORDANS

FORCES THERE ARE PITTED AGAINST IRAQI-SUPPORTED PFLO.

3. I ASKED BOTH KING AND RIFAI WHETHER THEY THOUGHT DOMESTIC COMPLAINTS ABOUT INCREASED JORDANIAN PARTICPATION IN OMAN HAD GROWN. THEY BOTH SAID NO, IT HAD ALL BUT DIED OUT AND WAS NOT AN ISSUE. WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING THAT WOULD GAIN SAY THIS ASSESSMENT.

4. COMMENT: WE SUSPECT KING WILL PREVAIL AND JORDAN SPECIAL FORCES WILL STAY IF SULTAN CONTINUES TO WANT THEM. KING'S VISIT WILL BE A DECISION POINT. WE BELIEVE HOWEVER THAT RIFAI AND BIN SHAKER WILL PROBABLY INSIST THAT THE JORDANIANS DO NOT TAKE ON A MORE SIGNIFICANT COMBAT ROLE, ESPECIALLY IF BATTALION IS ROTATED AT THE END OF THE SUMMER. END COMMENT.

PICKERING

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